

THE COW PUNCHER

By ROBERT J. C. STEAD
Author of
"Kitchen and Other
Poems"

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS
Copyright by Harper & Brothers

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Living with his father on a small, badly managed ranch, David has reached the age of eighteen with few educational advantages. An accident to the auto in which Dr. Hardy, a prominent physician, and his daughter, Irene, are touring the country, brings him into contact with Dr. Hardy. His father is broken, and he is necessarily content with being a friend, and something more, develops between Irene and David.

CHAPTER II.—Irene greatly enjoys the unconventional freedom of ranch life, and her acquaintance with David ripens into affection. On Dr. Hardy's recovery the young people part, with the understanding that David will seek to improve his position in life and they will meet again.

CHAPTER III.—The sudden death of his father leaves David with practically nothing but the few bare acres of ranch. The elder man having through years of dissipation wasted the income. His debts paid, David goes to the nearest town determined to keep his promise to Irene by acquiring an education and making himself worthy of her. He secures the first work offered, driving a team for a coal dealer, and meets a man named Conward about his own age, by whom he is led into dissipation.

CHAPTER IV.—Naturally of clean mind, David determines to get away from his dissipated surroundings. He writes a letter to Irene and goes to the city. He meets Edith, who is the hostess of a party, and begins the coveted education.

CHAPTER V.—Attracting the favorable attention of the managing editor of a newspaper, David becomes a reporter. Edith, secretly sensible of his good looks and general worthiness, falls in love with him, though with the memory of Irene in his heart, David does not perceive it.

As his acquaintance with the work of the police force increased Dave found his attitude toward moral principles in need of frequent readjustment. By no means a Puritan, he had nevertheless two sterling qualities which so far had saved him from any very serious misstep. He practiced absolute honesty in all his relationships. His father, drunken although he was in his later years, had never quite lost his sense of commercial uprightness, and Dave had inherited the quality in full degree. And Reenie Hardy had come into his life just when he came into his life. Reenie Hardy often thought of Reenie Hardy, and of her compact with him, and wondered what the end would be. He was glad he had met Reenie Hardy. She was an anchor about his soul. . . . And Edith Duncan.

While the gradually deepening current of Dave's life flowed through the channels of coal heaver, freight handler, shipping clerk and reporter its waters were sweetened by the intimate relationship which developed between him and the members of the Duncan household. He continued his studies under Mr. Duncan's directions; two, three, and even four nights in the week found him at work in the comfortable den, or, during the warm weather, on the screened porch that overlooked the family garden. Mrs. Duncan, motherly, and yet not too motherly—she might almost have been an older sister—appealed to the young man as an ideal of womanhood. Her soft, modulated voice seemed to him to express the perfect harmony of the perfect home, and underneath his even tones he caught glimpses of a reserve of power and judgment not easily unbalanced. And as Dave's eyes would follow her the tragedy of his own orphaned life bore down upon him and he rebelled that he had been denied the start which such a mother could have given him.

"I am twenty years behind myself," he would reflect with a grim smile. "Never mind, I will do three men's work for the next ten, and then we will be even."

And there was Edith—Edith who had burst so unexpectedly upon his life that first evening in her father's home. He had not allowed himself any foolishness about Edith. It was evident Edith was pre-empted, just as he was pre-empted, and the part of honor in his friend's house was to recognize the status quo. . . . Still, Mr. Allan Forsyth was unnecessarily self-assured. He might have made it less evident that he was within the enchanted circle while Dave remained outside. His complacency irritated Dave almost to rivalry. But the bon camaraderie of Edith herself checked any adventure of that kind. She was of about the same figure as Reenie Hardy—a little slighter perhaps; and about the same age; and she had the same quick, frank eyes. And she sang wonderfully. He had never heard Reenie sing, but in some strange way he had formed a deep conviction that she would sing much as Edith sang. In love, as in religion, he never setting up idols to represent his ideals—and forever finding fault with them.

Dave was not long in discovering that his engagement as coachman was a deception. Mrs. Duncan's kindness, to which he had accepted instruction without feeling under obligation for it. When he made this discovery he smiled quietly to himself and pretended not to have made it. To have acted otherwise would have seemed unwelcome to Mr. Duncan. And presently the drives began to have a strange attraction of themselves.

When they drove in the two-seated buggies on Sunday afternoons the party usually comprised Mrs. Duncan and Edith, young Forsyth and Dave. Mr. Duncan was interested in certain Sunday afternoon meetings. It was Mrs. Duncan's custom to sit in the rear seat for his better riding qualities, and it had a knack of falling about that Edith would ride in the front seat with the driver. She caused Forsyth to ride with her mother, ostensibly as

a courtesy to that young gentleman—a courtesy which, it may be conjectured, was not fully appreciated. At first he accepted it with the good nature of one who feels his position secure, but gradually that good nature gave way to a certain testiness of spirit which he could not entirely conceal.

The crisis was precipitated one fine Sunday in September, in the first year of Dave's newspaper experience. Dave called early and found Edith in a riding habit.

"Mother is 'indisposed,' as they say in the society page," she explained. "In other words, she doesn't wish to be bothered. So I thought we would ride today."

"But there are only two horses," said Dave.

"Well?" queried the girl, and there was a note in her voice that sounded strange to him. "There are only two of us."

"But Mr. Forsyth?"

"He is not here. He may not come. Will you saddle the horses and let us get away?"

It was evident to Dave that for some reason Edith wished to evade Forsyth this afternoon. A lovers' quarrel, no doubt. That she had a preference for him and was revealing it with the utmost frankness never occurred to the sturdy, honest mind. One of the delights of his companionship with Edith had been that it was a real companionship. None of the limitations occasioned by any sex consciousness had narrowed the sphere of the frank friendship he felt for her. She was to him almost as another man, yet in no sense masculine. Save for a certain tender delicacy which her womanhood inspired, he came and went with her as he might have done with a man chum of his own age. And when she preferred to ride without Forsyth it did not occur to Edith that she preferred to ride with him.

They were soon in the country, and Edith, leading, swung from the road to a bridle trail that followed the winding of the river. As her graceful figure drifted on ahead it seemed more than ever reminiscent of Reenie Hardy. What rides they had had on those foothill trails! What adventures into the great canyons! What adventures into the spruce forests! And how long ago it all seemed! This girl, riding ahead, suggestive in every curve and pose of Reenie Hardy. . . . His eyes were burning with loneliness.

He knew he was dull that day, and Edith was particularly charming and vivacious. She coaxed him into conversation a dozen times, but he answered absent-mindedly. At length she leaped from her horse and seated herself, facing the river, on a fallen log. Without looking back she indicated with her hand the space beside her, and Dave followed and sat down.

"You aren't talking today," she said. "You don't quite do yourself justice. What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing," he answered, with a laugh, pulling himself together. "This September weather always gets me. I guess I have a streak of Indian; it comes of being brought up on the ranges. And in September, after the first frosts have touched the foliage—" He paused, as though it was not necessary to say more.

"Yes, I know," she said quietly. Then, with a queer little note of confidence, "Don't apologize for it, Dave." "Apologize?" and his form straightened. "Certainly not. . . . One doesn't apologize for nature, does he?"

But it comes back in September."

He smiled, and she thought the subconscious in him was calling up the smell of fire in dry grass, or perhaps even the rumble of buffalo over the hills. And he knew he smiled because he had so completely missed her.

It was dusk when they started homeward.

Forsyth was waiting for her. Dave scented stormy weather and excused himself early.

"What does this mean?" demanded Forsyth angrily as soon as Dave had gone. "Do you think I will take second place to that—that coal heaver?"

"That is not to his discredit," she said.

"Straight from the corral into good society," Forsyth sneered.

Then she made no pretense of composure. "If you have nothing more to urge against Mr. Elden perhaps you will go."

Forsyth took his hat. At the door he paused and turned, but she was already ostensibly interested in a magazine. He went out into the night.

The week was a busy one with Dave and he had no opportunity to visit the Duncans. Friday Edith called him on the telephone. She asked an inconsequential question about something which had appeared in the paper, and from that the talk drifted on until it turned on the point of their expedition of the previous Sunday. Dave never could account quite clearly how it happened, but when he hung up the receiver he knew he had asked her to ride with him again on Sunday, and she had accepted. He had ridden with her before, of course, but he had never asked her before. He felt that a subtle change had come over their relationship.

He was at the Duncan house earlier than usual Sunday afternoon, but not too early for Edith. She was dressed for the occasion; she seemed more fetching than he had ever seen her. She led the way over the path followed the Sunday before until again they sat by the rushing water. Dave had again been filled with a sense of Reenie Hardy, and his conversation was disjointed and uninteresting. She tried unsuccessfully to draw him out with questions about himself; then took the more astute tack of speaking of her own past life. It had begun in an eastern city, ever so many years ago—

Chivalry could not allow that to pass. "Oh, not so very many!" said Dave.

"How many?" she teased. "Guess."

"Nineteen," he hazarded.

"Oh, more than that."

"Twenty-one?"

"Oh, less than that." And their first confidence was established.

"Twenty," thought Dave to himself. "Reenie must be about twenty now."

"And I was five when—when Jack died," she went on. "Jack was my brother, you know. He was seven. . . . Well, we were playing, and I stood on the car tracks, signaling the motor-man, to make him ring his bell. On came the car, with the bell clanging, and the man in blue looking very cross. Jack must have thought I was waiting too long, for he suddenly rushed on the track to pull me off."

She stopped, and sat looking at the rushing water.

"I heard him cry, 'Oh, daddy, daddy!' above the screech of the brakes."

"Sorrow is a strange thing," she went on, after a pause. "I don't pre-



"Did You Ever Feel That You Just Had to Tell Some One?"

tend to understand, but it seems to have its place in life. I guess it's a natural law. Well—" She paused again, and when she spoke it was in a lower, more confidential note.

"I shouldn't have told you this, Dave. I shouldn't know it myself. But before that things hadn't been—well, just as good as they might in our home. . . . They've been different since."

The shock of her words brought him upright. To him it seemed that Mr. and Mrs. Duncan were the ideal father and mother. It was impossible to associate them with a home where things "hadn't been just as good as they might." But her half-confession left no room for remark.

"Mother told me," she went on, after a long silence, and without looking at him. "A few years ago, 'if some one had only told me, when I was your age,' she said."

"Why do you tell me this?" he suddenly demanded.

"Did you ever feel that you just had to tell some one?"

It was his turn to pause. "Yes," he confessed, at length.

"Then tell me."

So he led her down through the tragedy of his youth and the lonely, ruggedness course of his boyhood. She followed sympathetically to the day when Doctor Hardy and his daughter Irene became guests at the Elden ranch. But before the end he stopped. Should he tell her all? Why not? She had opened her life to him. So he told her of that last evening with Irene, and the compact under the trees and the moon. Her hand had fallen into his as they talked, but here he felt it slowly withdrawn. But he was fired with the flame of love which had sprung up in the breath of his reminiscence. . . . And Edith was his friend and his chum.

"And you have been true?" she said, but her voice was distant and strained.

"Yes."

"And you are waiting for her?"

"Yes, I am waiting. . . . It must be so."

"It is cold," she said. "Let us go home."

CHAPTER VI.

Whatever the effect of this conversation had been upon Edith, she concealed it carefully, and Dave counted it one of the fortunate events of his life. He had been working under the spur of his passion for Irene, but now this was to be supplemented by the friendship of Edith. That it was more than friendship on her part did not occur to him at all, but he knew she was interested in him and he was doubly determined that he would justify her interest and confidence.

But just at this time another incident occurred which was to turn the flood of his life into strange channels. Dave had been promoted to the distinction of a private office—a little six-by-six "box stall," as the sport editor described it—but, nevertheless, a distinction shared only with the managing editor and Bert Morrison, compiler of the woman's page. Her name was Roberta, but she was masculine to the tips and everybody called her Bert.

Into Dave's sanctuary one afternoon in October came Conward. His habitual cigarette hung from its accustomed short tooth, and his round, florid face seemed puffier than usual. His aversion to any exercise more vigorous than offered by a billiard cue was beginning to reflect itself in a premature roundness of figure.

"Lo, Dave," he said, "Alone?"

"Almost," said Dave, without looking up from his typewriter. Then, turning, he kicked the door shut with his heel and said, "Shoot!"

"This strenuous life is spoiling your good manners, Dave, my boy," said Conward, lazily exhaling a thin cloud of smoke. "If work made a man rich you'd die a millionaire. But it isn't work that makes men rich. Ever think of that?"

"If a man does not become rich by work he has no right to become rich at all," Dave retorted.

"What do you mean by that word 'right,' Dave? Define it."

"Haven't time. We go to press at four."

"That's the trouble with fellows like you," Conward continued. "You haven't time. You stick too close to your jobs. You never see the better chances lying all around. Now suppose you let them go to press without you today and you listen to me for a while."

Dave was about to throw him out when a gust of yearning for the open spaces swept over him again. It was true enough. He was giving his whole life to his paper. Promotion was slow, and there was no prospect of a really

big position at any time. He remembered Mr. Duncan's remark about newspaper training being the best

preparation for something else. With sudden decision he closed his desk. "Shoot!" he said again, but this time with less impatience.

"That's better," said Conward. "Have you ever thought of the future of this town?"

"Well, I can't say that I have. I've been busy with its present."

"That's what I supposed. You've been too busy with the details of your little job to give attention to bigger things. Now let me pass you a few pieces of information—things you must know, but you have never put them together before. What are the natural elements which make a country or city a desirable place to live? I'll tell you. Climate, transportation, good water, variety of landscape, opportunity of independence. Given these conditions, everything else can be added. Then there's transportation. This is one of the few centers in America which has a North-and-South trade equal to its East-and-West trade. We're on the crossroads. Every settler who goes into the North—and it is a mighty North—means more North-and-South trade. I tell you, Dave, the movement is on now, and before long it'll hit us like a tidal wave. I've been a bit of a gambler all my life, but this is the biggest jack-pot ever was, and I'm going to sit in. How about you?"

"I'd like to think it over. Promotion doesn't come very fast on this job, that's sure."

"Yes, while you are thinking it over chances are slipping by. Don't think it over—put it over. I tell you, Dave, there are big things in the air. They are beginning to move already. Have you noticed the strangers in town of late? That's the advance guard."

"Advance guard of a real estate boom?"

"Hish! That's a bad word. Get away from it. Say 'industrial development.'"

"Let me elaborate. We'll say Alkali Lake is a railway station where lots go begging at a hundred dollars each. In drops a well-dressed stranger—buys ten lots at a hundred and fifty each—and the old-timers are chuckling over sticking him. But in drops another stranger and buys a block of lots at two hundred each. Then the old-timers begin to wonder if they didn't sell too soon. By the time the fourth or fifth stranger has dropped in they are dead sure of it, and they are trying to buy their lots back. All sorts of rumors get started, nobody knows how. New railways are coming, big factories are to be started, minerals have been located, there's a secret war on between great moneyed interests. The town council meets and changes the name to Silver City—having regard, no doubt, to the alkali in the slough water. The old-timers, and all that great, innocent public which is forever hoping to get something for nothing, are now glad to buy the lots at five hundred to ten thousand dollars each, and by the time they've bought it up the gang moves on. It's the smoothest game in the world, and every community will fall for it at least twice. . . . Well, they're here."

"Of course, it's a little different in this case, because there really is something in the way of natural advantages to support it. It's not all hot air."

"Now, Dave, I've been dipping in a little already, and it struck me we might work together on this deal. Your paper has considerable weight, and if that weight falls the right way you won't find me stingy. For instance, an item that this property—he produced a slip with some legal descriptions—"has been sold for ten thousand dollars to eastern investors—very conservative investors from the East. Don't forget that—might help to turn another deal that's just hanging. Sorry to keep you so long, but perhaps you can catch the press yet." And with one of his friendly mannerisms Conward departed.

Dave sat for some minutes in a quandary. He was discouraged with his salary, or, rather, with the lack of prospect of any increase in his salary. Conward's words had been very unsettling. They pulled in opposite directions. They fired him with a new enthusiasm for his city, and they intimidated a gang of professional land-gamblers was soon to perpetrate an enormous theft, leaving the public holding the sack. Still, there must be a middle course somewhere.

At any rate, he could use Conward's story about the land sale. That was news—legitimate news. Of course, it might be a faked sale—faked for its news value—but reporters are not paid for being detectives. The Evening Call carried a statement of Conward's sale, and on that statement was hung a column story on the growing prosperity of the city and its assured future, owing to its exceptional climate and natural resources, combined with its commanding position on transportation routes, both east and west and north and south.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

NOTICE OF SALE Under Mortgage

By virtue of the power and authority given by a certain Deed of Trust executed by Levi Owens and Delilah Owens on the 9th day of December, 1910 to D. E. Woodley which is recorded in the office of Register of Deeds for the county of Tyrrell, in book 60, page 253, the following property will be sold at Public Auction, viz:

That tract of land known as the Swain Land, situated in Seaport, Town of Tyrrell county, near Woodley's Station. Bounded on the north by the public road and the lands of Amos McClees; on the East by the public road leading from Creswell to Columbia; on the South by the lands of the heirs of Andrew Bate-man; on the west by the lands of Mrs. Sarah Williams (known as the Duncan farm.) Containing by estimation 40 acres. Place of sale, on the premises. Time of sale, 26th day of November 1919 at 12 o'clock noon. Terms of sale, cash. October 18, 1919.

D. E. WOODLEY, Trustee

-O24-4t

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION

Having qualified as administratrix of the late W. H. Whitehead, I hereby give notice to all persons indebted to his estate to come forward and make im-

An Elegant Farm FOR SALE

Containing 80 acres; 50 cleared and in high state of cultivation; good wire fence around farm; tenant houses; barn and stock house, including other buildings. This farm has natural drainage in big swamp that drains to the river.

30 acres woodland attached to this farm and estimated 200,-000 fee Pine Gum and Cypress lumber. This farm situated in Pasquotank County, one mile from Elizabeth City, and considered one of the best farms for early truck that there is in the State of North Carolina. This is a money proposition to an up to date farmer and a good investment. Our price \$12,000. We can deliver this farm January 1st.

Twiford & Twiford

L. B. TWIFORD

D. C. TWIFORD

Dealers in Real Estate

Phone 1049

423 Hinton Building

date settlement, and those holding claims against the same to present them for payment within twelve months from the date of this notice, or it will be

BELLE WHITEHEAD Administratrix p024-6t

October 20th, 1919.

WE PAY HIGHEST PRICES FOR CORN, SOJA BEANS and POTATOES

ALSO SELL GENUINE

Maine Grown Seed Potatoes

can see sample at our office in front of ice plant, Water Street, Elizabeth City, N. C.

G. W. PARSONS & SONS

English Surgeon in Civil War. Sir Charles Wyndham, the famous English actor, served as a surgeon in the American Civil War.

LYNNHAVEN OYSTERS

When in Norfolk don't forget BROWNE'S where you get the oysters with the tang o' the sea, on the half shell or any way you like 'em.

E. W. BROWNE

113 Washington Street Opposite Pender's Norfolk, Va.

Dr. Wm. Parker

Dentist

317 Hinton Building Elizabeth City, N. C.

Phone 984

Aug. 8—13t

DR. JOHN H. BELL

Osteopathic Physician

326 HINTON BUILDING

Elizabeth City, N. C.

c s 19-1t

Elizabeth City

Business College

THE SCHOOL THAT STANDS FOR EFFICIENCY

ROBINSON BUILDING

Pointexter Street

Elizabeth City, N. C.



LORRAINE HOTEL

Norfolk, Virginia

Hotel Service for Three Generations

Operated by the

Grady and Tazewell Sts.

DODSON HOTEL CORP.

"Excellent Will Make Your Hair Long, Too"

EXELENTO FOR KINKY HAIR

"Every woman can have nice, long hair," says May Gilber. "My hair has grown 25 inches long by using your wonderful EXELENTO QUININE POMADE."

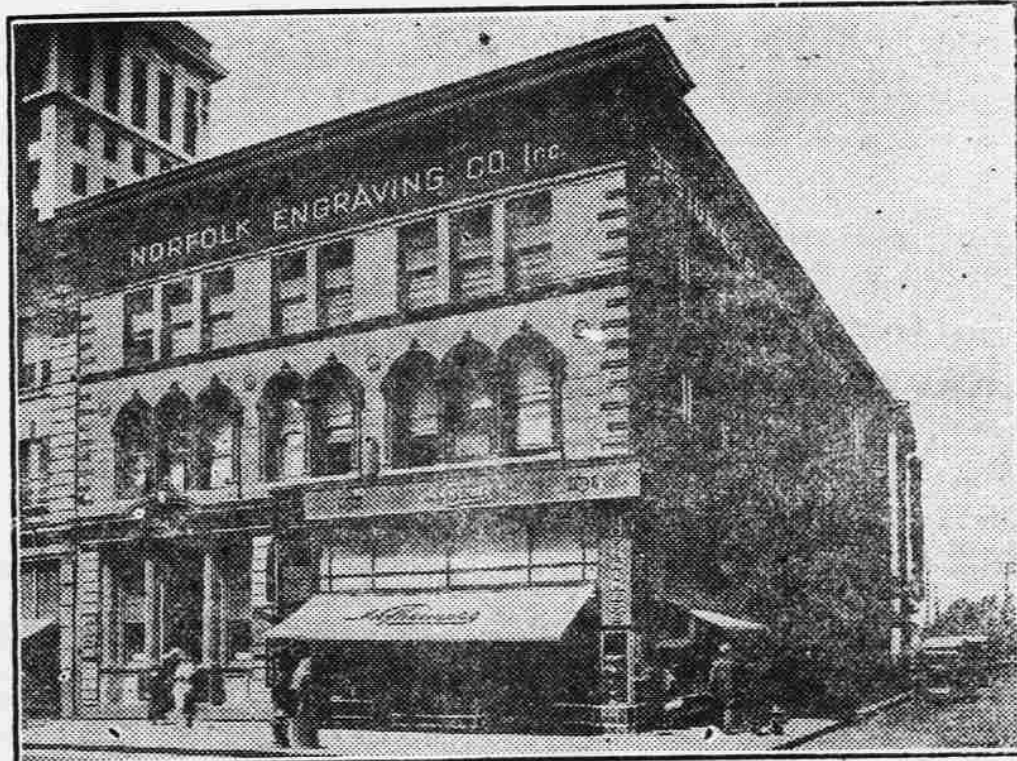
Don't be fooled by fake Kink Removers. You can't straighten your hair until it's soft and long. Our pomade removes dandruff, feeds the roots of the hair and makes it grow long and silky.

We make Exelento Skin Beautifier, an ointment for dark, sallow skin. Used in treatment of skin troubles.

PRICE OF EACH 25c IN STAMPS OR COIN AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE Write for Particulars

EXELENTO MEDICINE CO., Atlanta, Ga.

COPYRIGHTED



Norfolk Engraving Co.

Makers of Printing Plates

217 Granby St.

Norfolk, Va.